
BARN DANCE!

Authors: Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault

Illustrator: Ted Rand

Publisher: Henry Holt

THEME:

Good music and great dancing make us feel happy, and foot-stomping bluegrass music is an American original.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Unable to sleep, a young boy follows the sound of music across the fields and finds an unusual barn dance in progress.

LeVar takes viewers to the hilltops of Tennessee for a look at true bluegrass music and dancing. Clogging is featured along with various instruments used by bluegrass musicians. Viewers learn how a fiddle maker creates an instrument from beginning to end.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Before viewing the program, listen to some bluegrass music. Discuss ways in which it sounds different from other types of music with which students are familiar. How does the music make them feel and what do they want to do (i.e., tap their feet, clap their hands, etc.)? What instruments do they hear?

Some students may be unfamiliar with a “hoedown” or “barn dance.” Before watching, find out what they know about this type of event. After they have watched, discuss new ideas they acquired from the program that helped to clarify the concept.

Since this story takes place at night, ask the students if the barn dance was a dream or an example of the boy’s imagination and why they think as they do.

Discuss the style in which the book, *Barn Dance!*, is written, so students recognize that the story is told in rhyme, instead of the narrative style of most stories that they read. Ask them to speculate as to why the authors chose to write the story in rhyme.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Invite a resource person into the classroom who square dances or clogs to do a demonstration and have them teach students a few steps.

Work with the music teacher to teach the students some American folk songs. Explain that folk songs typically originated from people’s occupations or from regions of the country.

If possible, take the class on a field trip to a farm that has an old-fashioned barn. Ask the owner to guide the tour of the barn, explaining the functions of the different areas. Have the farmer explain the uses of various pieces of machinery and the general operation of the farm.

Invite someone who plays the violin into the classroom to demonstrate the difference between violin music and “fiddle” music.

Obtain a recording of farm animal sounds. Have students identify the animal that makes each sound. What other sounds might one hear on a farm? What different farm sounds might be heard at night instead of in the daytime?

All through the program, LeVar uses comparisons, such as, “higher than a snail on a cornstalk.” Many of his comparisons are similes. Explain to students how similes use the words “like” or “as” to imply a comparison. Brainstorm a list of similes with expressions the students might have heard before, such as “quiet as a mouse,” “hungry as a bear,” “sly as a fox,” etc. Display the list in the classroom so that students can add to it as they encounter examples from books and other situations. Encourage them to think of creative comparisons in their own writing, such as “quiet as the moon on a snowy night.”

As a class, make a rhyming dictionary. Take some examples from the book, and put a “word family” on each page (e.g., “_ight,” “_air,” and “_in”). Have students brainstorm words for the page that rhyme with the phonogram. Keep the rhyming dictionary in the writing center for student use. Add to it as they find other rhyming words.

Provide all sorts of materials, such as cloth scraps, wallpaper scraps, fabric trims, yarn, twine, different types of paper, etc., and have students design a scarecrow. Display their creation on a wall or bulletin board.

RELATED THEMES:

farm life
musical instruments
dancing

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #85 — Sophie And Lou

Program #125 — Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

A former educator, editor, and creator of school materials, Kansas native Bill Martin, Jr. started writing books to give children confidence in their ability to read. He believes that reading should leave “children with the sharp taste of words lingering on their tongues.” His co-author, John Archambault, agrees, “I

want [children] to float on a river of language, to listen to the music in what they read." As a result, the two have collaborated on several lively, lyrical books for children, including **Reading Rainbow** feature selection, *Knots on a Counting Rope*, and review book, *Up and Down on the Merry-Go-Round*. Bill Martin, Jr. is also the author of review book, *The Maestro Plays*. He makes his home in New York City. John Archambault lives with his family in California.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

An accomplished watercolor artist and illustrator of a rapidly increasing body of work, Ted Rand has had no formal art training and came to children's book illustrating relatively late in life. His illustrations are featured in **Reading Rainbow** books, *Knots on a Counting Rope* and *My Shadow*. Ted Rand lives in Washington state with his wife Gloria, an author with whom he has collaborated on several books.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

HALF A MOON AND ONE WHOLE STAR
by Crescent Dragonwagon, illus. by Jerry Pinkney (Simon & Schuster)

I LIKE THE MUSIC
by Leah Komaiko, illus. by Barbara Westman (HarperCollins)

THE OLD BANJO
by Dennis Haseley, illus. by Stephen Gammell (Simon & Schuster)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

BIG RED BARN
by Margaret Wise Brown, illus. by Felicia Bond (HarperCollins)

THE HEART OF THE WOOD
by Marguerite W. Davol, illus. by Sheila Hamanaka (Simon & Schuster)

THE MASTER VIOLINMAKER
by Paul Fleisher, photos by David Saunders (Houghton Mifflin)

ON THE FARM
by Lee Bennett Hopkins, illus. by Laurel Molk (Little, Brown)

BENJAMIN'S BARN
by Reeve Lindbergh, illus. by Susan Jeffers (Dial)

THE DAY THE GOOSE GOT LOOSE
by Reeve Lindbergh, illus. by Steven Kellogg (Dial)

MIDNIGHT FARM
by Reeve Lindbergh, illus. by Susan Jeffers (Dial)

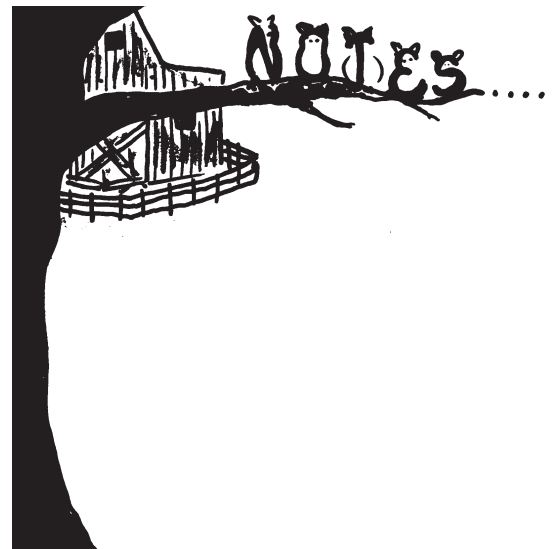
GRANNY WILL YOUR DOG BITE AND OTHER MOUNTAIN RHYMES
by Gerald Milnes, illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root (Alfred A. Knopf)

HEAR THE WIND BLOW: AMERICAN FOLK SONGS RETOLD
by Scott R. Sanders, illus. by Ponder Goembel (Bradbury)

AMERICAN FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN
by Ruth Crawford Seeger, illus. by Barbara Cooney (Doubleday)

FIDDLE-I-FEE: A FARMYARD SONG FOR THE VERY YOUNG
adapted and illus. by Melissa Sweet (Little, Brown)

NOAH'S SQUARE DANCE
by Rick Walton, illus. by Thor Wickstrom (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)



A barn dance is any kind of dance involving traditional or folk music with traditional dancing, occasionally held in a barn, but, these days, much more likely to be in any suitable building. The term "barn dance" is usually associated with family-oriented or community-oriented events, usually for people who do not normally dance. The caller will, therefore, generally use easy dances so that everyone can join in.